



GRIMSBY motorhome manufacturer Auto Trail has shed nearly a quarter of its workforce as it deals with a fall in orders for the luxury vehicles.

A total of 46 jobs have been lost at the Europarc plant, despite attracting £6.75-million worth of orders from a major show in Birmingham.

The figure was below the previous two years' sales as the credit crunch and uncertain outlook crushes consumer confidence. The announcement came as economic experts yesterday forecast the beginning of the anticipated recession.

Stuart Turpin, joint managing director of the firm, said: "The current world economic situation has affected the rate of sale of all luxury items. Our motorhomes certainly fit that market sector.

"We have therefore realigned our 2009 production volumes to meet current market demands."

The losses will leave the firm, which recently doubled the size of its manufacturing facilities, with a workforce of 143.

That is still substantially higher than when it moved to Europarc in 2000, with a team of 84 there to witness the Duke of Kent opening the substantial plant.

That was the start of a £6-million investment in Grimsby by the French-owned parent company Trigano. Mr Turpin said a 30-day consultation period had begun with workers, including a selection process.

He said: "We have enjoyed tremendous growth and have a very experienced workforce that we value, but we cannot buck world trends. We have had to adjust to the market expectation for next year. Whether it is one or 101 jobs it is very, very sad for everyone involved. But we have got to make sure our foundations are good. We are part of a big international group, the group is still very strong, and we need to be fighting fit for the future. In time I hope I can welcome these people back should vacancies arise.